



FY06 REQUEST FOR COMPETITIVE GRANT PROPOSALS for Riparian Buffer Restoration Fund

SECTION I GENERAL INFORMATION

Purpose of the Request for Competitive Grant Proposals (RFP)

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) is pleased to announce the availability of riparian buffer restoration grants. The grant, provided on up to a 50 % matching basis, will give financial assistance for projects for the construction, re-establishment of native species or other improvement projects that establish or restore riparian habitats or enhance the overall quality of riparian buffers for water quality improvement/protection.

Submission of Proposals Deadline: June 12, 2006

Eligible parties (refer to "Eligibility of Applicants") wishing to apply for grants should prepare proposals according to the proposal format and requirements of Appendix I. Incomplete proposals or proposals not following Appendix I may be considered ineligible or receive a lower ranking.

All project proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on **June 12, 2006**. All proposals must be submitted to:

Gregg J. Cassidy, Senior Environmental Planner
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Sustainable Watersheds Office
235 Promenade St.
Providence, RI 02908

It is anticipated that the awards will be announced by June 26, 2006 and development of grant agreements will follow. (*Projects should not be initiated until after grant agreements are approved as this may affect eligibility for funding.* The RFP will be posted on DEM's web site at: <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/benviron/water/finance/non/index.htm>

The RFP will also be posted at: <http://www.purchasing.state.ri.us>

Eligible Projects

Riparian buffers are areas of land adjacent to rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and coastal waters that is maintained in a natural condition and is integral to the ecology of natural systems. The goal of the Narragansett Bay and Watershed Restoration Fund is to restore and protect the water quality, enhance the economic viability and environmental sustainability of Narragansett Bay and the State's watersheds. The Riparian Buffer Restoration sub-fund is intended for reestablishment of native species or other projects that will establish or restore riparian habitats.

Eligibility of Applicants

Persons, governmental, and non-governmental entities.

Eligible entities shall possess the administrative capacity to manage the grant. Interested entities, which are unable to meet the administrative capacity requirements, may wish to consider partnering with state, municipal and other agencies that possess the appropriate capacities.

Eligible Activities

Riparian area restoration involves activities undertaken to restore land adjacent to riparian areas to a natural condition.

Eligible expenses generally include the costs of salary, travel, supplies, construction, and contractual services directly related to the project. RIDEM generally will not subsidize personnel costs not directly related to the performance of the project.

Applicants who have questions regarding the eligibility of project activities should contact Gregg J. Cassidy at (401) 222-4700 ext 4403 or gregg.cassidy@dem.ri.gov.

Evaluation and Selection of Proposals

Project proposals will receive an initial screening by representatives of the Office of Water Resources for basic eligibility criteria.

Eligible proposals will be referred to a interagency review committee that will evaluate the eligible proposals based on the expected water quality benefits. Upon completing the proposal evaluation, the interagency review committee will make recommendations for funding to RIDEM's director.

Preparing the Proposal for Final Approval

For projects that are selected, RIDEM may request the applicant to modify project proposals based on comments received during project evaluations and the selection process. The applicant must submit the revised project proposal to the RIDEM prior to final approval. RIDEM will conduct a final review of the proposal in coordination with appropriate agencies and, if satisfied that all review comments have been adequately addressed and that the proposal is satisfactory will approve it for funding.

SECTION II--FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Match Amount Requirements and Sources

“Match” refers to funds or services used to conduct a project that are not borne by grant funds. All project match must: (1) relate directly to the project for which the match is being applied; (2) be reasonably valued; and (3) be supported by documentation.

Match may include: direct expenditure of the applicant’s own funds; funding acquired through third party sources, in-kind contributions¹ by the applicant or other sources that are directly related to the project. Federal or non-federal public agencies, organizations or individuals may provide third party in-kind contributions. Volunteer services provided to the sponsor for project activities and travel costs may be valued as match at rates consistent with rates ordinarily paid by employers for similar work. General volunteer time is currently valued at \$16.05/hour.

Match is an indicator of local commitment to a project and figures prominently in proposal eligibility and ranking. Proposals must include funds or services to match the grant eligible funding on up to a 50% grant-match ratio. At least 50% of the *total project budget* is provided by the grantee.

¹ The term "in-kind contributions" refers to services that are directly related to the project, but do not otherwise have a specific marketable value or price.

SECTION III TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF GRANT AWARDS

Administrative Capacity

RFP applicants must have institutional capacity to comply with the applicable grant management requirements. These include but are not limited, to managing allowable project costs, match, cost accounting, audit procedures, records access, record keeping, subcontracting, and progress reporting. Failure of the selected applicant to accept and carry out these obligations may result in cancellation of the grant award.

Project Agreement

Applicants must enter into an agreement with RIDEM to establish mutually agreeable terms for completing the project. Items in the agreement include, *but are not limited to*:

- Assigned RIDEM grant agreement number and project title.
- Scope of work including tasks, schedules and deliverables. (Agreements usually have the approved project proposal incorporated as the scope of work.
- RIDEM and sponsor responsibilities.
- Project points of contact for RIDEM and the sponsor.
- Statement of the project's total budget, matching budget, and state or federal budget.
- Statutory and regulatory requirements for contracting such as fair-share allotments (i.e., minority-owned and women-owned business enterprises).
- Requirements for subcontracting.
- Project payment schedule and payment terms.

RIDEM and the State of Rhode Island take no responsibility for project work done outside the term or scope of the agreement or prior to full approval of an agreement. Applicants should NOT anticipate any funding for work that is done before approval of a grant agreement. Agreements are not valid until the Rhode Island Department of Administration issues the appropriate encumbrance (i.e., purchase order). All agreements must be signed and dated by an authorized agent of the sponsor and RIDEM.

Grant Agreement Extensions and Deferrals

Project applicants must be prepared to initiate projects upon award of a grant. In very rare circumstances, RIDEM may grant a project deferral for up to one year provided that the grantee provides an appropriate explanation for an unanticipated delay in the project.

RIDEM typically issues grant agreements for one to two years. If the grantee is unable to complete project work within this timeframe an extension may be requested. Requests for extensions must be in writing and describe satisfactory progress toward the completion of the project. Requests must also discuss an appropriate reason for the delay in project completion (e.g., unanticipated additional tasks).

RIDEM may refuse extensions or deferrals. RIDEM urges project sponsors to complete projects within the timeframe of their grant agreements.

Invoicing & Payment

Once a grant project has been approved for funding, payments will be made to the sponsor according to the payment schedule and terms contained in the project agreement. Payments will be made on a reimbursement basis only and, whenever possible, in the form of single-payment grants. Reimbursement payments are not scheduled more frequently than once a month. *Again, funding should NOT be anticipated for work that is undertaken prior to approval of a grant agreement.*

RIDEM is not liable for any cost incurred by sponsors or any sponsor subcontractor(s) prior to final state approval of the grant agreement (i.e., contract) and no payments in advance of final project approval will be made. Liability of the State of Rhode Island is limited to the terms and conditions of the agreement. RIDEM grant agreements are *not* valid until a Purchase Order (PO) is issued.

Audits

Sponsors will be subject to fiscal assurances per terms of the project agreement. Fiscal assurances include but are not limited to the audit requirements established by the State of Rhode Island and the US Office of Management and Budget in Circular No. A-128 or A-133, as amended and as appropriate. The sponsor must have fiscal systems that operate in accordance with these circulars.

Reporting Requirements

Final project reports are required for all projects. Progress reports in a format provided by RIDEM may be required for any project. Specific reporting requirements will be explained to sponsors and detailed in project agreements following project selection.

Permitting

Many grant projects will require a permit from RIDEM or review by another governmental agency to proceed. Acceptance of a proposal under this RFP in no way absolves the applicant from any permitting or review requirement. Acceptance of a proposal does nothing to improve the likelihood that a project will receive a permit or accelerate any permitting or review process. Applicants should consider the need to acquire permits and other agency reviews and plan projects accordingly. Failure to obtain and comply with permits is generally considered a material breach of a grant agreement and may jeopardize project funding.

Compliance Actions and Grant Applicants

It is RIDEM's policy that financial assistance shall neither directly or indirectly benefit parties whose willful action or inaction has resulted in damage to the environment. At the director's discretion, RIDEM may restrict or limit funding due to the occurrence of criminal, civil enforcement actions or compliance matters. Generally, such a restriction or limitation may be removed once appropriate corrective action is taken in accordance with a consent agreement or court order.

To be eligible for grants, applicants must disclose any existing violations and compliance actions related to their proposal. This includes issuance of any notice of intent to enforce. Grant applicants must also inform DEM Office of Water Resources in the event that an enforcement or compliance action is undertaken after a grant application is filed.

For more information contact Gregg J. Cassidy at 222-4700 ext. 4403. Gregg.Cassidy@dem.ri.gov

Appendix I. Proposal Format & Requirements

The grants must meet all application requirements of Section 10 of Rules and Regulations for the Narragansett Bay and Watershed Restoration Bond Fund, November 2005 and should include:

- Cover letter stating the purpose of the project, expected water quality improvements, and other pertinent information.
- Grant application form
- Map of the proposed project site
- Project schedule and budget
- Supporting materials and information